

Remarks of Clint Huffaker
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For the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24

February 27, 2012

As a high school French teacher in the town of Ridgefield, I would like to comment on several proposals contained in Senate Bill 24.

During the past 25 years, I have taught various subjects, including ESL, remedial reading and writing, Spanish, and now French. In fact, after many years teaching in other states (California, Florida and Utah) I returned to Connecticut 12 years ago largely due to the reforms that had made my home state an ideal place to teach. Given the current proposals regarding teacher evaluations, collective bargaining and tenure contained in Senate Bill 24, I am deeply concerned for the future of education in our state.

High-quality teachers are the greatest asset to public education, and we need to take advantage of their experience in the classroom and their knowledge of how to help students succeed. Without incentives, such as fair and just evaluation procedures, the job security provided by tenure and the guarantee of a livable salary through collective bargaining; I have no doubt that the educational system in the great State of Connecticut will fall victim to the ills that plague the States of California and Florida, where students receive an inferior education. Highly qualified teachers like me, with multiple advanced degrees and years of valuable instructional experience, come to Connecticut and stay here because it is a good place to teach, and students benefit from these phenomenal teachers. If the current reforms are approved, great teachers will leave the profession and our state. In order to prevent this from occurring the following must occur:

- 1) Educator evaluation plans, based on strong state standards, need to be developed collaboratively with teachers and implemented consistently with support to help teachers improve and excel.
- 2) Tenure and dismissal need to be fixed by requiring due process based on “just cause,” which ensures that a neutral hearing officer can issue a binding and timely decision in a termination hearing.
- 3) Connecting teacher credentialing needs to be linked to teacher training and advanced coursework beyond a bachelor’s degree in order for us to be responsive to the real and changing needs of student learners.
- 4) Fair and equitable distribution of state aid needs to be ensured—we need critical funding that does not strip public funds from local schools.
- 5) Parents need to be engaged by creating innovative and positive ways to increase involvement in schools and reinforce lessons with their children at home.
- 6) Proposals in SB24 (the governor’s education bill) that would weaken collective bargaining, link a teacher’s license to a supervisor’s evaluation, shift new funding away from local public schools

unfairly, and impose experimental programs that have not been proven to work need to be rejected.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that the vast majority of Connecticut teachers love and take great pride in our work. We do not simply “show up”, but put in long hours with unending dedication to help our state’s students succeed. I fear that the reforms proposed in Senate Bill 24 will bring a screeching halt to everything my colleagues and I have worked for during our careers; ultimately, the state’s public school students will suffer the most. Please do not allow this to happen.